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EDLD 658.50: School Public Relations for Superintendents - Online

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UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling
EdLd 658
School Public Relations for Superintendents
Summer 2006

Place: Education Building
Time: May 22nd to June 9th Online
Instructor: Dean Sorenson, Ph.D.
Phone: 243-5610
Office Hours: By Appointment, Room 207A

1. Course Description

This course will investigate the appropriate leadership and management roles of the modern school superintendent as they relate to community relations. The theory of dissatisfaction will be highlighted and course work will also focus on the application of theory on case studies. This course will also include some of the more traditional approaches to public relations typically attributed to the business. However, the primary objective is to have the student understand political theory and how an awareness of this can be helpful in developing and maintaining a good relationship with internal and external publics.

2. Culminating Outcome.

Often, practitioners reject the application of leadership theory to their day-to-day work in favor of the “real world” approach to problem solving. This attitude is at best uninformed and at worst, anti-intellectual. Powerful theories help us explain what goes on around us. Therefore, using the text, other teaching materials and class discussions, students will develop and make a presentation to the class that demonstrates the application of theory to real life or case study situations. It is also hoped that students can work on actual work problems and share their progress with the class.

3. Enabling Outcomes.

Your study of leadership theory, both in this class and outside, should include but not be limited to the following issues:

- Develop an understanding of your beliefs, vision, operating principles as they relate to public relations.
- Conflict and change in modern school governance
- The emergence of American public schools
- The foundation of the American community
- Superintendent/Board relationships.
- The nature of community participation in schools
- Site politics and dissatisfaction theory
- Utilizing dissatisfaction theory
- Superintendent as communicator (internal and external publics)
- Public relations and dissatisfaction
- Schools as social systems
- The politics of education

4. Activities

Class activities require the active participation of all class members. The instructor subscribes to a philosophy of learning that holds that everyone engaged in learning, teaches every other engaged person. That is, an open mind, participating in meaningful discussion is a powerful learning environment. When someone is not in class and thereby not engaged in the discussion, the learning environment for everyone else is diminished.

Student contributions will be judged on a demonstrated understanding of the knowledge base, the ability to translate and apply that knowledge to real situations and the student's ability to communicate effectively during times

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of disagreement among colleagues. Informed contributions to class discussions are critical to collective learning and professional development. It is expected that all students will foster their own learning and the learning of others through their positive and thoughtful engagement in class activities.

Should individual written assignments be given, it is expected that these assignments be the original work of the individual and that APA style will be applied with requisite attribution and citation.

Activities may include:

- Individual written assignments and oral presentations
- Large and small group discussions of readings, professional experiences and emerging ideas and concepts
- Students will also be asked to find material to be presented to the class on a variety of topics germane to the study of public relations.
- Individual and small group presentations on other activities in which collaboration and team work is expected
- A mid-term exam
- A final examination

Leading Class Discussions (Weekly)

As a part of the reading assignments, each student is expected to bring to class, the following week, three higher order, thought provoking questions or insights for class discussion. These questions should be in writing and may be submitted to the instructor or class members. The questions should be used as a tool generate class discussion and students will be expected to teach the class the concept or idea behind the questions.

Individual Class Presentation (30 minutes)

Students will present a case study and describe how the theories or concepts learned in class relate to that case. An analysis of the case and possible public relations issues should be identified and articulated to the class.

5. Grading

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| • Class attendance and quality of participation in class discussions | 15% |
| • Quality of leadership in topics from readings (class discussions) | 15% |
| • Presentations to class (issues taken from enabling outcomes or readings) | 15% |
| • Mid-term examination | 25% |
| • Final examination | 30% |

6. Required Readings

- Lutz, F.W. & Merz, Carol. (1992) The politics of school/community relations. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Other readings as may be assigned.